2 3 JUL 1963
KRISHNAGIRI RESERVOIR PROJECT
SE 79

Development Work among RURAL WOMEN

A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL SEMINAR.

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OFFICE OF THE ... TRA. CENTRE
2 3 JUL 1963
KRISHNAGIRI RESERVOIR PROJECT
SE-79

Development Work

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Report of a National Seminar

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION i

Guiding Principles 1

Objectives 3

Programmes 5

Methods and Techniques 8

Personnel 10

Organisation and Finance 14

Recommendations of the Seminar 17

APPENDICES :

The Working Paper 19

List of Participants 25

Rashtrapati, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, delivering the inaugural address. Along with him are Dr. Sushila Nayyar and Sardar Gurmukh Nihal Singh, then Chief Minister, Delhi State.

INTRODUCTION

RURAL WOMEN and their welfare poses before our planners serious and stubborn problems. The participation of rural women in the various development schemes initiated by the Government is negligible. Qualified and trained workers, willing to acclimatise themselves to rural conditions and live in villages, are few compared to the needs of the nation. There are a number of agencies both official and non-official with programmes of their own but there is a feeling that unity of purpose—and effort—and proper coordination among them would enhance the impact of their work. It is generally felt that, although improvement in income would follow development schemes, unless there is a comprehensive plan of work among rural women specifically directed towards their problems and needs, there would be little tangible evidence of progress towards the realisation of broader objectives of the development programmes. To help the clarification of these issues, the Indian Adult Education Association and the Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh, took the initiative and convened a seminar on development work among rural women from the 2nd to the 9th September, 1956. It was held at the Alipur village, eleven miles from Delhi. Sixty delegates from all over the country, representing forty non-official and official agencies participated in the Seminar.

This Seminar was the first of its kind. Its subject matter had not been discussed in any great detail earlier; nor had so many women workers representing so many voluntary and governmental agencies in this field come together to exchange their experiences.

Fundamental issues discussed at the Seminar were :—

1. Formulation of objectives and programmes ;
2. Definition of appropriate methods and suitable techniques of work among rural women ;
3. Recruitment and training of personnel ;
4. Organisational needs of a comprehensive scheme and

the possible sources of finances for the implementation of the schemes.

The business of the Seminar was conducted in groups and in plenary sessions. At the first plenary session which met on the afternoon of the 2nd, delegates discussed the Working Paper and thereafter split into four groups, each of which discussed each aspect of the Working Paper. The various group reports were consolidated as soon as the reports were received in the Central Office by a committee consisting of the group leaders, the Director and some of the senior delegates. These consolidated reports were again placed before plenary sessions and were formally adopted as the report of the Seminar. Thus, this Report embodies the considered opinion of the delegates on each and every aspect of the problem of development work among rural women.

The Seminar was inaugurated by the Rashtrapati, Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Many prominent persons were present at the inaugural function. Among these were, the Chief Minister of Delhi State, Sardar Gurmukh Nihal Singh, the Chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board, Shrimati Durgabai Deshmukh, the Union Production Minister, Shri K.C. Reddy, and Members of Parliament and Legislature.

In his inaugural address, Dr. Rajendra Prasad gave a lucid exposition of the programme of national reconstruction and pointed out that the emphasis of the Government was in promoting schemes of development in rural areas, for an overwhelming majority of India's population live in the rural areas. These programmes, he said, were however, of a nature which demanded the active participation of rural women. Hence the Government had laid great stress on the work that was being done among rural women. He congratulated the sponsoring organisations, the Indian Adult Education Association and the Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh for their initiative and said that these two agencies could count on the support of the Government.

Several prominent persons, including Shri U.N. Dhebar, President of the Indian National Congress, addressed the delegates. Many prominent specialists in various fields also spoke to the delegates. Among these were, Miss Evelyn Hersey of the Technical Cooperation Mission, Dr. P. D. Shukla, Deputy Educational Adviser to the Government of India

and Shri Sohan Singh, Assistant Educational Adviser to the Government of India, and Shri T. A. Koshy, Special Officer Social Education, C. P. A. Lady Coomarswami, Vice-President of the ACWW, came to seminar as special observer on behalf of that body. They helped to bring before the delegates new view points and a clearer perspective of the problems before them. At the concluding session of the Seminar, Shri K. G. Saiyidain, President of the Indian Adult Education Association and Education Secretary to the Government of India held the delegates enthralled with his brilliant address. Shri V. T. Krishnamachari, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission who delivered the valedictory address gave a lucid *expose* of the community development programmes in India. This helped the delegates to understand their own role and appreciate the Seminar findings in the context in which they were to function.

The Seminar was notable for more than one reason and particularly significant in the context in which it met. Since the advent of independence there had been a spurt in activities directed towards rural reconstruction. This was a novel experience for the government which till then had confined itself largely to the very narrow functions of maintaining law and order. For voluntary agencies, which on their part, had been functioning in an atmosphere of indifference, if not hostility, of the government, it was the first occasion when they could look upon a government which would sympathise with their work and assist them in their activities. Thus both types of institutions had functioned since independence in a situation which was altogether new. They had had however, sufficient experience to warrant a review and the Seminar offered an opportunity for it. Moreover in the field of work among rural women there were a number of questions yet to be asked and answered. The Seminar set out the questions and sought the answers from workers themselves—both in government agencies and voluntary institutions.

The Seminar achieved more than merely indicating answers to the various questions. An extract from the daily Bulletin brought out by the delegates themselves indicates the kind of experience which the Seminar provided to the workers. Commenting on the group discussions on the first day, the Bulletin says: "Beginning of discussion was marked by frowns, shyness, monopolising the floor by a few and the end—an appreciation of diversities, loosening of feelings

of 'my idea' and 'yours', merging of ideas. It is fascinating to watch group spirit emerging, and with it, the friendly probing into each others life and work." This cementing of workers together with a common purpose was perhaps an even more significant contribution of the Seminar.

The success of the Seminar was, in a large measure, due to the efficient manner in which the Director of the Seminar Dr. Sushila Nayar conducted the deliberations. She was genial but firm and discussions in plenary session were always on the subject and not around it. With meticulous care she went through the consolidated reports and ensured that they conveyed what the delegates wanted to convey. Thanks to her good humour and understanding, an atmosphere of cordiality prevailed in the Seminar all through and there was full cooperation and active participation of the delegates.

Dr. Krishna Bai Nimbkar,
General Secretary,
Bhartiya Grameen Mahila Sangh.

S. C. Dutta,
General Secretary,
Indian Adult Education Association.

December 1, 1956.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT

Guiding Principles

At the first plenary session of the Seminar which met soon after the inaugural session, the draft working paper of the Seminar was placed before the delegates. The discussion that ensued revealed that, while there were no differences on the issues that had been raised in the working paper, there was a certain ambiguity of the factors behind those issues. Though the ambiguity was only one of emphasis, it was felt that unless it was resolved, discussions might lack common ground and that they might tend to be desultory. Consequently, the delegates agreed to adopt, as a frame of reference, certain general considerations against which the issues were to be judged.

These considerations required, it should be recognised that:

Firstly, the rural woman, as an integral part of the society in which she lives, is subject to the pressures generated by the peculiar social background of that society. Hence, while considering problems connected with development work among rural women, a consideration of this background is necessary. That background, in specific terms, comprised of the variety of customs, habits and traditions which had resulted from social and cultural trends in the community. These factors not only influence the personal and social conduct of women but also set the norms for the community as a whole. An observation of the values inherent in these customs and manners, would enable the worker to assess the community's reactions to any schemes for the advancement of rural women. It would also enable

the worker to conserve the desirable and eliminate the undesirable ones.

Secondly, schemes for the progress of rural women should essentially form part of the larger schemes for the progress of the rural community as a whole and the schemes should specifically be so designed as to meet the special social, cultural and economic needs of the rural women. The schemes should be integrated at all levels.

Thirdly, hasty introduction of welfare schemes sometimes creates disturbances in family inter-relationships. Consequently, in chalking out schemes for development work among rural women, the need for maintaining the unity, integrity and harmony of family life should always be borne in mind.

Fourthly, development work among rural women would be effective only if such schemes are adopted which have impact on all the aspects of the rural women's life. "Total woman in her total environment" should, therefore, constitute the keynote of all welfare work among rural women.

Fifthly, while considering any schemes for rural women, the usual tendency is to emphasise their weaknesses, backwardness and limitations. It is necessary, however, that in formulating schemes, the essential vitality and strength inherent in rural women and their environment should find as much emphasis.

Sixthly, the success of development work among rural women depend upon the worker's personality. Workers with a spirit of devotion, aptitude and right attitudes are essential in promoting welfare schemes among them.

Seventhly, schemes should be realistically geared to the needs of rural women. They should be so formulated as to evoke ready response and acceptance. Availability of resources, both in terms of personnel and equipment, should be

borne in mind. Phasing of programmes should be based on this consideration. Proper timing is important not only for the effective operation of programmes but also for keeping up the morale of rural women and the workers through achievement.

Objectives

In keeping with these basic principles, the ultimate objective of development work is to ensure an improvement in the general standard of living of the rural women. This implies that development work would ensure the strengthening of family relationships inside the family and outside it; an enrichment of life which would make rural women happy and healthy individuals. For the achievement of this ultimate objective, the immediate aims of the development work should be as follows:

(i) Basically, every woman is a housewife first. Her other duties vary with time and circumstances. Hence, it is essential to make her a competent, resourceful and economic housewife. However, the other aspects of her life such as that of a wage-earner or a citizen should also receive due attention. Her work as a mother and housewife is generally time-consuming and tiring. Over and above this, many of the rural women have to work on their own farms or as wage-earners to supplement family income. Consequently, they have neither time nor energy to spare for recreation and cultural pursuits. One of the objectives of development work with rural women, therefore, is to encourage and enable them to develop ways and means of meeting the demands on their time and energy more economically and effectively so that they can have some leisure.

(ii) The health of rural woman is often impaired due to frequent child births, ignorance, superstition, unbalanced diet and unhealthy surroundings in which she has to live and work. Another objective is, therefore, to provide facilities for her physical well-being. To that end, rural women wage-earners

should be helped to secure maternity and health benefits as are given to women working in industry, mines etc.

(iii) In the absence of any provisions regulating minimum wage in rural areas, women wage-earners are often given lower wages than men just because they are women. Young girls and women are often at the mercy of their employers. As a result, they are exploited by unscrupulous people. In this context, the objective should be to ensure better working conditions for women and to make them aware of the existing legislation and other measures introduced for the removal of their social and economic disabilities. Work should be done for securing more comprehensive and effective measures where necessary.

(iv) Development work should enable rural women use their leisure for learning arts and crafts, develop their aesthetic sense and help them acquire knowledge of themselves and the world around them. It should enable them to learn more effective and easy methods of work as mothers, housewives, wage-earners etc. and help them supplement family incomes. Objectives of such development work should, therefore, be improvement in recreational, cultural and educational opportunities for rural women.

(v) Though several private and governmental agencies have made some attempt towards the detection, care and rehabilitation of destitute, dependent, neglected and maladjusted women in large urban areas, the rural communities have been left completely untouched. This is due to lack of proper law-enforcing authority, limited number of existing rural welfare agencies and lack of available data regarding the nature and extent of this problem in the rural areas. Work among rural women, therefore, should include some measures for detection, care and rehabilitation services through private and governmental agencies.

(vi) If these programmes of development work are to be effectively carried out in a systematic and sustained manner,

development of local leadearship among rural woman is essential. Another objective should, therefore, be to train and encourage local women leaders.

In applying these objectives in specific circumstances and to specific communities, the aspirations natural to the community have to be taken into account. It is also necessary to keep in mind factors which provide for health and stability in the community and those that cause stagnation and decay. Consideration has also to be given to traditions and schemes should strengthen healthy traditions and eliminate unhealthy ones.

Programmes

These objectives for development work demand programmes which will have an impact on the domestic, economic, recreational and cultural life of rural women. These programmes can be broadly categorised as below :

1. Social Education

Social education should enable rural women use all possible resources to better their living conditions. This programme consists of specific educational activities for the promotion of :

(a) better health through better nutrition, use of improved methods and practices with regard to preservation of food, planning for balanced diet, promotion of kitchen gardens, poultry farming, maternity and child care, family planning, personal health and hygiene etc.

(b) better home life through simple home decoration, efficient home management etc.

(c) better citizenship through awareness of civic rights and duties, essentials of environmental sanitation; and a knowledge of social and legislative measures to ensure protection of rural women against social and economic exploitation.

2. Literacy Programme

Effective implementation of literacy programme depends on the recognition on the part of rural women of its usefulness in their daily life. Therefore, introduction of this programme has to follow social education programme aimed at raising their standard of living. Women should be stimulated to organise literacy classes for themselves. Follow up-programmes in the form of mobile libraries and production of suitable literature is most important.

3. Cultural and Recreation Programmes

Cultural and religious activities have an important place in the life of rural women. These consist of bhajans, kirtans, celebration of religious and social festivals, folk songs, folk dances, picnics, community dinners etc. The value of these activities for educating rural women for better living and for developing community consciousness as well as imparting in them a sense of unity need hardly be emphasised.

4. Other Programmes

In addition to these educational, recreational and cultural programmes it is also necessary to implement programmes to ensure economic security and efficiency. These programmes should consist of such activities as training in home crafts, weaving, basket-making, toy making, soap making, leather work etc. which would enable them to supplement their family income. Activities should also be undertaken to encourage and help rural women utilise the existing facilities for marketing their goods. Small savings should be encouraged through appropriate agencies. Rural women should be helped to use the modern methods and equipment as ball-bearing chakkies, ambar charkhas, smokeless choolas, improved agricultural implements so as to enable them to economise time and energy in their work in the home and outside.

Activities should be undertaken to ensure economic and

social protection for rural women in specific spheres such as enforcement of minimum wages, better working conditions, protection against social and economic exploitation.

Programmes for guidance, care and rehabilitation of the destitutes, the dependant, the neglected and the mal-adjusted women cannot be effectively developed unless the existing governmental and non-governmental agencies undertake to study the nature and extent of this problem in rural areas. The specific activities on which the rural women workers can concentrate on stimulating the development of this programme will be mainly in the sphere of creating community consciousness for the development of these services as well as for their utilisation when available.

Finally, surveys, studies, seminars and pilot projects should be undertaken wherever possible so as to collect necessary data to determine contents of programmes and to evaluate and assess progress.

In formulating and implementing programmes the following basic principles should be essentially observed :

(1) Programmes should not be imposed from outside according to pre-conceived ideas but should emerge out of discussions with the fullest participation of rural women at all levels.

(2) Details of any programme should be formulated after a thorough study and observation of the life of local rural women, their conditions, resources, needs etc.

(3) The programme should be such as to stimulate their resourcefulness, inculcate initiative and desire for self-help and encourage development of local leadership.

(4) The programme should be such as to enable rural women become aware of the existing services in the areas of health, education, recreation, crafts, training etc. They should also aim at releasing rural women from orthodoxy, superstition

and prejudices which prevent them from utilising the existing services to the full.

(5) The educational and training aspects of the programmes should concentrate on educating and training rural women for better living conditions and for promoting personal health.

Methods and Techniques

Firstly, a definition of the term 'methods and techniques' is necessary. "Method" is how programmes are introduced. For instance, the worker can set an example to be followed by rural women by the way in which she conducts herself and lives among them. This method would make it possible for changes to be brought about among rural women with least resistance. Providing concrete services such as for instance medical aid, milk distribution for children etc. is another method.

The term 'technique' would refer to specific skills and detailed preparations for organising and developing programmes. In putting across and developing programmes the manner in which workers approached people is important. This approach depends on the workers' personality and her attitude to them. To gain an acceptance of herself among people it is essential that her attitudes and reactions to them are correct. Once a positive relationship—relationship in which rural women reposes confidence in the worker—has been established she can introduce any programme effectively. Adaptability, capacity for sensitive and objective analysis of the people and situations, an out-going personality and a genuine interest in the well-being of the people are some of the qualities most essential in the worker in order to develop the right approach.

A worker trained in the correct approach has several methods of implementing programmes. These are :

(a) Individual method, whereby the worker establishes contact with a member of the family and then with the whole family. This may be done through social contact, or through services. Individual counselling and help with regard to care of child, family planning, marital relations are a few instances of service of this type.

(b) The group work method, whereby programmes such as education, recreational and cultural activities are developed for groups. Bhajans and kirtans. folk songs and dances, hobbies and suitable games are examples of this type of activity.

(c) The community method whereby the worker formulates programmes for the whole community through development of activities, such as health and sanitation drive, organisation of community dinners, melas.

(d) Mass method whereby the programmes are formulated at inter-village or even wider levels through activities such as mass meetings, cinema shows. However, the effectivity of this method is limited.

(e) Periodic assessment and evaluation of the effectivity of programmes in terms of response of the rural people as well as the worker's role are essential. This would enable the worker to adapt programmes to changing conditions.

The above methods can be used formally or informally. While in the formal methods, the use of already prepared materials such as audio-visual or other side are required, in the latter, training and education are imparted through informal talks, discussions, etc. The secret of success of any method lies in co-relating it with the life and occupations of the rural people.

The specific techniques used to develop the programmes are the techniques of using audio-visual materials such as film shows magic lanterns, dramas, exhibitions, khaddar chitravalis and flannelgraph, puppet shows, flash cards, slides etc.

The other specific techniques used are babyshows, prabhat pheries, wall-newspapers, story telling, cleanliness competitions arts and crafts competitions, short-term camp for family groups, leadership camps. The listing of the above specific techniques or skills would show that while certain techniques are more effective with individuals, others are useful at group and community levels.

Personnel

The problem of personnel for work among rural women poses the following fundamental questions :

(1) What type of workers are required ?

(2) From where to get the village workers ?

(3) What training should they have ?

(4) What should be the basis of workers' selection ?

(5) What protection, amenities and assistance should be given to the workers to enable them to operate effectively ?

(6) To whom could the workers turn for help, guidance and support when they are in difficulty ?

(7) How to make rural women assume responsibility and leadership for rural work ?

The answers to these questions would provide an adequate basis for further thought and planning.

Specific problems such as availability of personnel, recruitment, training, working conditions, remuneration as well as the qualities required of the personnel are as follows :

1. Availability of Personnel

The great dearth of women workers in rural areas is partly due to the difficulties of working conditions experienced by city dwellers when they go to work in rural areas. Inade-

quate amenities for living, as well as for work, discourage workers. The rural worker is expected to undertake a large variety of activities, cover long distances without adequate transport and there is almost complete absence of supervision and guidance in their day to day work. Inadequate protection when they are on tour and at times even in the villages creates serious problems. Their salaries and housing conditions are generally unsatisfactory. Attitudes and opinions of the rural people about young independent women workers are often uninformed and, to say the least, unhelpful. Consequently it is essential that governmental and non-governmental agencies should take steps to improve the working conditions of rural women workers through measures such as providing them with women assistants, limiting the expectations with regard to programmes and activities that they are required to develop, limiting area of the work to a few villages within easy reach. Also they should be provided better housing and sanitary facilities, better transport etc. These measures, if fully implemented, would attract more women workers for work in the villages.

The ultimate solution of the problem of dearth of rural women workers would be to draw such personnel from the villagers themselves. For this, the need for stimulating local leadership can hardly be over-emphasised. Suitable rural women may be associated with trained workers as their understudy or assistants in an honorary or paid capacity and gradually coached to take over increasing responsibility. The education of young girls in the rural areas should be specially given full attention so that they could be trained for jobs of responsibility in rural areas.

Systematic and effective utilisation of voluntary workers and part-time paid workers would be yet another way of tackling the problem of paucity of rural women workers.

2. Recruitment

The personnel for work with rural women can be drawn from :

(a) Locally from village itself ;

(b) Middle Schools and High Schools of the nearby areas ;

(c) Colleges ;

(d) Mahila Mandals and other women's organisations ;

(e) Women institutions etc.

The recruitment of personnel should be entrusted to a Board consisting of representatives from governmental as well as non-governmental organisations working in the field and representatives of the village community wherever possible. The Heads of training institutions or their nominees should always be associated with the selection of candidates. To ensure better response for recruitment of personnel, it is also necessary that sufficient publicity, on the lines of recruitment drives for the defence services, in addition to formal notifications calling for applicants, should be undertaken.

3. Qualifications of Candidates

Candidates with the following qualifications may be considered for appointment.

(a) Minimum age should be twenty years. However, physical and mental maturity may be taken into account in exceptional circumstances.

(b) Attitude and aptitude for the work should be considered through a comprehensive interview as well as objective methods of assessing the qualities required of such personnel.

(c) The academic qualification requirement should be determined in terms of the type of work, duties and responsibilities which the rural women workers are expected to carry out on different levels. For example, for Gram Sevikas, the minimum qualifications could be Matric but for village girls it

could be Vernacular Final, while that of higher staff it could be at Intermediate and Graduate level.

It is important to draw the workers on the basis of voluntary choice, rather than departmental appointments. Invariably, recruitment should be strictly on the basis of merit.

4. Training

The training of women workers for rural work calls for a thorough study of duties, responsibilities and activities that these workers will be required to carry out. The knowledge of the conditions of rural women, their attitude and reaction is necessary. The training of personnel should, therefore, include the following :

(a) furnishing of thorough information with regard to problems of rural women and the conditions in which the workers will have to develop their programmes. This will include information on subjects like socio-economic and cultural background, community and family life in rural areas, problems of rural women etc.

(b) giving them opportunities to use various skills necessary for developing and implementing programmes through practical experience.

(c) giving them knowledge of subjects such as home science, social education, maternity and child care etc. which are necessary to solve some of the pressing problems of rural women. The training should also aim at creating interest in and resourcefulness for carrying out their work with rural women. Since the success of work in rural areas depends a great deal upon the personality of the workers, emphasis in training should be on enabling the workers to understand themselves and the role they are expected to play. They should also be helped to imbibe the qualities such as ability to win people's confidence, sensibility, objectivity, and flexibility which are very essential for the successful implementation of their

programmes. Such training can be imparted more effectively through group discussions and practical work rather than through formal teaching methods.

5. An organisation of rural women workers at different levels on a countrywide basis should be developed to which workers could turn to for help, guidance and support when they are in difficulty. Women officials appointed at higher levels could also effectively deal with this problem.

Organisation and Finance

The organisational needs for implementing programmes towards the objectives, defined earlier, demand coordination of the activities of various non-governmental and governmental organisations in the field. The nature of coordination required and the various ways and means to achieve it are as follows :

Coordination to be effective has to start right from the bottom. Coordination between personnel on the highest level is as necessary as at the lowest. Formal meetings between various organisations are not enough but there should be understanding of each other's purposes and workers in various agencies should have personal contacts and make a positive attempt to adjust and coordinate their policies, programmes and functions. This must be done in the context of the field worker's experiences.

The following are some of the methods to achieve this type of coordination :

1. Different agencies working in a particular area should form a committee of their representatives. This committee should meet at regular intervals and discuss problems and progress of work. In such committees, members of the local Panchayats and other representative bodies of the community may also be represented. On the same pattern, there should be committees at tehsil, district and higher levels also.

2. There should be periodical conferences and seminars of the workers of all the agencies in the field. At these meetings, effective measures for eliminating any overlapping and supplementing each other's activities may be found out. These meetings will also serve to help workers to understand points of differences, so that they can agree to differ where necessary, and at the same time enlarge the areas of agreement.

3. Women's voluntary organisations or Mahila Mandals may be set up in each village so that these will serve as a link between rural women and the specialized social agencies working in the area. Such Mahila Mandals may take up any specific item of service and help to develop it or help in the promotion and development of several activities undertaken by different agencies working in the village or area. Such Mahila Mandals should be organised from the village to the District, the State and the National level. At each of these levels, the Mandals should cooperate and coordinate with authorities and other social service agencies. These Mandals should be able to stimulate and ensure increasing participation in all rural welfare and development activities.

The role of the village level worker in effecting coordination is crucial. He or she is in a position to assess the needs of rural women in the area and bring this to the attention of such agencies as may be able to fulfil that need. The village level worker, therefore, should maintain a liaison with the workers of other institutions and agencies in the area and must always be willing to assist them. The village level worker must not work with an exclusive attitude towards other organisations but must always respond with alacrity to offers of cooperation. Cooperation involves coordination and this demands a tolerant and receptive attitude towards other workers and agencies. To develop this attitude, workers' clubs could be set up at different levels where a sense of comraderie and common purpose can be strengthened. The workers must always bear in mind that their ultimate purpose is to develop local leadership so that the presence of the

outside workers would become unnecessary as early as possible.

Finance

The following are some of the general principles which may ensure necessary funds for the various agencies from the two available sources of finance—viz ; the Government and people.

One of the principles suggested, to cover grant-in-aid to institutions and agencies, is that the quantum of aid should be sufficient so as to make the organisation acquire roots among the people among whom it is working. There-after, the grant in aid may decrease as and when people's contribution increased. People's contribution may be either in cash, kind or labour. Agencies have to ensure that salaries of workers are regularly paid. These must be, therefore, met not out of people's contribution but through Government aid. People, however, must be encouraged to contribute for other expenses and programmes which the agency may develop for the service of the local community.

To maintain the morale of workers and the confidence of people, the flow of grant in aid must be adequate regular and timely. Causes which hamper such a flow must be removed. While determining the basis of Government grants, the agency's need should not be the only criteria and the Government may also lay down specific standards of work to be maintained in consultation with agencies operating in the field, and should evolve a machinery to supervise, help and encourage the agencies to develop and maintain these standards.

Another source of finance could be to create, at the national level, an "Anna Fund" from the people for the advance-ment of rural women. The collections for this fund may be augmented by contributions from philanthrophic individuals. A part of the collections from Sampattidan may be specially

earmarked for work among rural women. The administration of this fund may be entrusted to a Board consisting of representatives from different institutions and other public functionaries. The utilization of this fund must be such as to ensure maximum benefits to the locality from where the money has been collected. The administration of this fund should as far as possible be decentralised and administrative costs reduced to the barest minimum.

Recommendations of the Seminar

1. The Seminar recommends that in formulating national development schemes much greater attention should be given to the needs of the rural women as housewives, workers in the fields and as wage-earners than has been done so far.

2. Organisation of rural women at National, State District, Tehsil and Village level is necessary for the promotion of the above objectives.

3. To develop leadership among rural women, educational approach is recommended. The method of education should be through services fulfilling felt needs in the life of women in rural areas.

4. For education of young girls, village schools should evolve suitable type of educational programmes for teenagers—so as to fit them for the fulfilment of the role they would have to play in the rural community.

5. The development funds should set aside money for organisation of public cooperation programmes and development of leadership from among rural women.

6. National and Regional Seminars of women workers in rural areas and rural women leaders should become a regular feature of development programmes and Government should welcome initiative from voluntary organisations in this direc-

tion and give them all help financial and otherwise for this type of work.

7. Studies, Surveys and pilot projects should be encouraged to assess progress and effectiveness of different programmes in achieving the object of developing effective leadership among rural women.

APPENDIX I

THE WORKING PAPER

The First Five Year Plan was the first effort in India's history to envisage a pattern of planned development of India's economy. The Plan recognised the need for an integrated approach to the problems of India's poverty and the Community Development Programme was conceived as the main feature of the Plan. The essential principle of the programme was to assist people to raise themselves to better standards of living. The programme, therefore, aimed to provide the necessary services which people required for their all round betterment. One aspect of the programme was to educate people to utilise these services. The Government intends to extend the scope of this programme to cover the whole country by the end of Second Five Year Plan. In addition to this, considerable scope is also being provided for the expansion of social service facilities in rural areas through the activities of the Central Social Welfare Board. Thus, whatever hindrances that existed in the way of the rural population seeking better standards of living, are aimed to be removed. The purpose of this Seminar is to consider, under these circumstances, in what manner rural women can be helped to improve the quality of their lives. The Seminar will discuss :

(i) Objectives for work among rural women in the context of the various development and welfare schemes of the Government ;

(ii) programmes necessary for those objectives ;

(iii) methods of work and techniques of approach ;

(iv) ways and means of maintaining a constant source for the supply of personnel ; and

(v) organizational needs and financial requirements.

The following is a brief appraisal of the issues involved and the delegates may adopt this as the basis for their discussions :

1. Objectives

It will help delegates to define objectives if they take into consideration the different chores and duties which make up the pattern of the rural women's day to day life. The objectives need be related to these different responsibilities and the delegates may consider how rural women can be assisted to fulfil them efficiently, effectively and creatively.

Considered from the diverse functions she fulfils, the rural woman appears as :

(i) a housewife ;
(ii) a farmer ;
(iii) a worker in the field ;
(iv) a daily wage-earner ;
(v) a worker in cottage and small-scale village industry ;
(vi) a serf-labourer ;
(vii) unemployed, underemployed or requires rehabilitation.

It is not suggested that every rural woman should fall under one or the other category stated above but, by and large, rural women combine in themselves characteristics of nearly all or some of the above.

Since the objectives the delegates may define should be applicable to all rural women, delegates should bear in mind two basic factors, viz. (i) that the majority of rural women have a multitude of responsibilities and therefore find little time or energy for cultural and recreational pursuits ; (ii) that majority of them are poor.

2. Programmes

Delegates will next discuss programmes suitable to promote the objectives they have defined.

One cardinal principle of the programmes should be such that each activity generates in rural women the motivation to further improvement in each and every aspect of her life. This can happen only if rural women can feel that by accepting what the worker is trying to put accross, she is able to live better and fulfil her chores one step better than she does at present. It is with this background that the delegates may consider specific programmes for each aspect of the objectives they have defined.

In working out a suitable basis for programmes, the delegates may take into consideration the work that is already being done by numerous agencies—voluntary as well as official—and find out how these could be related to the objectives they have defined. These organisations each has a particular emphasis of its own. For instance, the Central Social Welfare Board's attempt is to provide welfare services to rural women through their Welfare Extension Projects and that of the NES organisations is to carry education in Home Science through their gram sevikas. The Kasturba Trust, earlier in the field. has been attempting to build its work along certain specific lines linked to concepts of Sarvodaya and the Gandhian principles of village reconstruction. The Community Projects Administration through Social Education programmes is attempting to pave the way for community development. The activities of each of these organisations, thus, have in them elements which complement those of the others. The Seminar will have to consider how best the activities of these various agencies can be directed to the objectives it has defined.

3. Methods and Techniques of Work

A common factor to any programme of activity of either welfare or education is the need of self-effort. Unless

people *want* social services and are stimulated *to learn* to utilise them, no programme can either be effective or lasting. The Seminar will have to find out how best this can be done.

In doing so, special care is necessary to discriminate between the aspects of women's life which can be changed and which cannot be changed. Otherwise, there is the danger of an over enthusiastic worker looking at problems from *her* point of view and thereby setting up emotional resistances among rural women. This is because the rural women have had traditions of their own and their lives have formed a part of the pattern history has woven for them and it is neither wise nor possible to change that pattern all at once.

4. Personnel

Personnel is, perhaps, the most difficult problem that developmental work among rural women will have to tackle. Because education among rural women has not been extensive, either there are not sufficient rural women intellectually equipped to be capable of working out programme or those rural women who are intellectually equipped show distinct preference to abandon their rural homes and gravitate towards cities and towns. Another complication is the urban educated girls neither find themselves capable of adapting themselves to the rigours of rural life nor evince an appreciation and sympathy for that cultural pattern of that life. Perhaps the only way out of this dilemma is to rely on what local material is available and train it to suit the requirements of the programmes.

In order to keep up a perennial supply of such local material, there is need to effect a complete overhaul in the education of girls in the rural areas. Starting right from the Primary through the middle school standards and extending to the higher stages, a prescribed course of Home Science and short-term Home Extension courses will educate and train 'teen age girls for career-housewives suited to rural conditions.

Appropriate subjects for such education and training may be discussed by the Seminar. Such improved type of education need not necessarily be higher education but one which might help in personality development and equip girls to assume local leadership. At the same time, it could provide the basic skills necessary, whether for just a housewife, or for a career as a home extension worker.

Another way out would be to incorporate certain basic approaches in the training of the personnel of all the different types of development cadres. This will enable them to understand the perspective with which they are to implement programmes, bearing in mind the rural women's point of view.

The Seminar may consider qualifications of the personnel and the nature of a special orientation that may be necessary. Training should be such as to inculcate in them not merely a grasp of the objectives of programmes but also enable them to understand the background in which these programmes have to be implemented. Training may also provide the skills necessary for workers to approach rural women.

5. Organisation and Finance

In recommending organisational forms for the implementation of programmes, delegates have to bear in mind that the organisational structure should be capable of carrying an impress of local conditions and needs. Under what type of an organisation this is possible and how such organisations could be stimulated, where they do not exist, are questions which the Seminar will have to consider. The Seminar might recommend suitable measures and policies which the Government would need to adopt if government agencies are to be sensitive to local situations and demands.

Finally, the Seminar will have to consider how relationship between non-official and official and among different official agencies at the local levels can be so regulated as to lead to

their complementing each other's functions and efforts.

The problem of finance is always a ticklish one. In a society where poverty is the rule rather than the exception, there is not much scope for any self-financing programme, however laudable its objectives may be and however enthusiastic the rural population might feel about. The consumption level is so dismal that it would be futile, perhaps unwise also, to except programmes to be self-financing, assuming even a rise in income as a result of planning, for this income is bound to be nothing spectacular. Therefore welfare and education programmes will have to be state financed for a long time yet to come. This is where the rub lies. The programmes will have to rely on voluntary effort, which to be real, abjures any form of official direction or control that borders on interference. How to reconcile these apparently contradictory considerations will have to be discussed by the Seminar.

Delegates to the Seminar with Shri V. T. Krishnamachari, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission and Shri K. G. Saiyidain, Education Secretary, Government of India.

S·E·80

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S.E. 8

PUBLISHED IN FEBRUARY 1957 BY AWADH SHARMA, OFFICE SECRETARY, FOR INDIAN ADULT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, 30, FAIZ BAZAR, DELHI.

February, 1957
Series No. 26

Price : Re. 1/-/-

Printed in the Naya Hindustan Press, Chandni Chowk, Delhi.